

**FAIRFAX COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
POLICY AND PROCEDURES COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, MAY 12, 2005**

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Walter A. Alcorn, At-Large
John R. Byers, Mount Vernon District
Janet R. Hall, Mason District
Suzanne F. Harsel, Braddock District
James R. Hart, at-Large
Nancy Hopkins, Dranesville District
Laurie Frost Wilson, At-Large

COMMITTEE MEMBER ABSENT:

None

OTHER PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT:

Frank A. de la Fe, Hunter Mill District
Kenneth A. Lawrence, Providence District

OTHERS PRESENT:

Fred Selden, Director, Planning Division (PD), Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ)
Alison Kriviskey, PD, DPZ
Charlene Fuhrman-Schultz, PD, DPZ
Sara Robin Hardy, Assistant Director, Planning Commission Office
Linda B. Rodeffer, Clerk, Planning Commission Office

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Chairman Janet R. Hall called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. in the Board of Supervisors' Conference Room, Fairfax County Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, Virginia 22035.

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Chairman Hall noted that tonight the Committee would be briefed on the on-going review of the Policy Plan.

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Fred Selden, Director, Planning Division (PD), Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ), announced that Alison Kriviskey was retiring at the end of June and that Charlene Fuhrman-Schultz had would assume lead responsibilities on the 2005-2006 South County Area Plans Review (APR).

Mr. Selden distributed a copy of the Board of Supervisors Consideration Item from 2001 with the Planning Commission's recommendations regarding the Comprehensive Plan Review Process 2001 to 2005 (Countywide), a copy of which is in the date file. He called the committee's attention to page 2, item 3, Policy Planning, concerning the process for updating the Policy Plan, noting that the Board of Supervisors had endorsed the Planning Commission's recommendation that amendments to the County's Policy Plan be considered as a result of policy studies or other initiatives on an on-going basis rather than awaiting a particular year. He said reviews of stream protection, revitalization, telecommunications, and other modifications of the Policy Plan had been done in accordance with this initiative. He pointed out that a review of three elements of the Policy Plan, public facilities, parks, and transportation, had also been undertaken.

Mr. Selden also distributed another Board of Supervisors Information Item dated November 19, 2001, concerning the schedule for review of the public facilities, parks and recreation, and transportation sections of the Policy Plan with an update attached dated April 12, 2005, a copy of which is in the date file. He said review of all sections had been completed, as shown on the attachment, except the following:

- Drainage and stormwater management review – postponed based on watershed planning and other ongoing initiatives;
- Parks and recreation review – scheduled for a Planning Commission recommendation tonight;
- Schools review – not as heavily tied to standards as other sections and no completion date has been determined.
- Transportation review – to be completed in late 2005.

Mr. Selden noted that this schedule did not preclude staff from looking at other Policy Plan elements, such as the Housing section based on the recent Affordable Preservation Committee and their recommendations.

Mr. Selden agreed with Commissioner Alcorn's request that staff contact either the Policy and Procedures Committee or the Housing Committee before advertising amendments to the Housing section.

Commissioner Hart cautioned against a piecemeal approach and said staff should ensure that Plan reviews took place within the legally established time frame.

Commissioner Alcorn commented that a State statute required localities to review their Comprehensive Plans every five years, but that "review" was not defined. Chairman Hall pointed out that a review could be a determination that the Plan did not need to be amended.

Mr. Selden commented that now was the time to discuss the Plan review process, specifically what had been achieved as well as what had not been achieved, and to recommend changes to the process. He noted that a Draft of "Plan Amendment Activity" had also been distributed, listing activity which had taken place on Area Plans, 2000-2005; Policy Plan, 2000-2005; and Area Plan Review 2001-2002, to give the Committee some sense of what had taken place in a five year period. (A copy of this document is in the date file.)

Mr. Selden stated that in the past the term "Out-of-Turn Plan Amendment" had been used to identify anything that was being considered outside of the regular APR cycle, including special studies on specific areas, such as Merrifield, and policy initiatives such as the Chesapeake Bay supplement. He said reviews would now be specifically identified, for example, policy initiatives or amendments associated with special studies.

Responding to a comment from Chairman Hall, Mr. Selden agreed that the Planning Commission did not certify to the Commonwealth of Virginia that a review of the Comprehensive Plan had been conducted.

Commissioner Alcorn suggested that perhaps a hybrid of both the old and the new process would be best. Chairman Hall agreed because she said it was the Commissioners, Supervisors, and staff who knew best when a review was needed, but at the same time citizens needed to know when a review was scheduled if they had specific concerns.

In response to a question from Commissioner Harsel, Ms. Kriviskey said that there were approximately 15 or 16 elements in the Policy Plan. Commissioner Harsel said if those elements were reviewed at the same time as the Area Plans were reviewed, perhaps the At-Large Commissioners could handle them.

Responding to a question from Chairman Hall, Mr. Selden said reviewing both Area Plans and the Policy Plan at the same time could be labor intensive and non-productive because often the nominator of a Policy Plan change was never heard from again after a detailed review and analysis had been done by staff. Chairman Hall commented that, even so, a review had been done on that portion of the Plan.

Mr. Selden cautioned against reviewing the Policy Plan too frequently because policies, which were meant to provide a framework for decision making and were tied to the goals of the Board of Supervisors, should be broad and given enough time to be implemented. He said this was especially true of Countywide initiatives.

Commissioner Wilson expressed concern that recommendations for transportation improvements could not be included in nominations for the most recent APR cycles. Mr. Selden pointed out that citizen comment on the Transportation Section was open until May 31 and that each comment received would be summarized and responded to by Department of Transportation staff.

Commissioner Alcorn suggested that when recommendations for changes to elements of the Policy Plan were solicited, a new process should be established for evaluation, without detailed staff analysis, and those with merit presented to the Planning Commission for review. Mr. Selden agreed with this approach, pointing out that it would provide a screening process. He added that feedback on the current transportation comment period might be useful in developing a new approach.

With regard to a hybrid system, Commissioner Wilson said that because some of the elements, such as transportation, schools, and trails, might need to be amended more frequently, perhaps a nomination process was needed and could be part of the APR cycle review but identified by a different name.

Commissioner Harsel suggested that perhaps meetings could be held around the County to address specific elements of the Policy Plan as had been done in the past.

Commissioner Hart concurred with the approach suggested by Commissioner Alcorn and said the current review of the Transportation element did not allow citizens to actually nominate changes. He said perhaps there should be a procedure whereby citizens could suggest changes which would be vetted at the committee level and those with merit would go forward.

Ms. Kriviskey said from staff's perspective, it was critically important that a hybrid system allow staff the opportunity to review the entire element, even if comments/nominations were not received for specific sections.

Summarizing the discussion, Chairman Hall said the Committee was recommending that the APR cycle consist of three parts, North County review, South County review and Policy Plan review. She said new procedures would have to be established which would allow staff to review an entire element which would then be vetted before the Committee after which the Planning Commission would determine which elements would be included for review during the APR process. She added that this would not require a detailed staff analysis but would ensure that worthwhile changes could be made.

Responding to a question from Ms. Kriviskey, Chairman Hall said that this process would allow staff to make suggestions.

Mr. Selden said staff would like to begin a dialogue with the Committee in the fall because there were aspects of the Comprehensive Plan, other than use, density, and intensity, which needed attention, such as editing the character section of Area Plans and updating recommendations which had been implemented. He pointed out that had been done in the past as part of the APR process and that a recodification might be necessary which would include redrafting, receiving input, and adoption. He added that he thought it needed to be treated the same as a major Plan review.

Chairman Hall requested that Mr. Selden's staff provide the Committee with a list of those areas that need to be reviewed and recommendations for how they should be reviewed.

Sara Robin Hardy, Assistant Director, Planning Commission Office, pointed out that tonight's discussion was the beginning of a dialogue and policy changes did not have to be adopted immediately. She also said that recommendations for changes to the review process would have to be presented to the full Planning Commission as well as the Board of Supervisors.

Chairman Hall agreed, but said it would be helpful to narrow the focus and have written recommendations that Committee members could review before the next meeting.

Mr. Selden agreed with Ms. Hardy and said this was the beginning of a lengthy dialogue. Chairman Hall commented that she realized staff time to work on this might be limited, but at least the Committee would have an idea of what needed to be accomplished. Commissioner Alcorn pointed out that if changes were made now, they would not become effective until 2007-08.

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The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.
Janet R. Hall, Chairman

For a verbatim record of this meeting, reference may be made to the audio recording which can be found in the Office of the Planning Commission of Fairfax County, Virginia.

Minutes by: Linda B. Rodeffer

Approved: November 16, 2005

Linda B. Rodeffer, Clerk
Fairfax County Planning Commission

Attachments:

Board of Supervisors Consideration Item dated March 19, 2001 – The Planning Commission's Recommendations Regarding the Proposed Plan Review Process, 2001-2005 (Countywide)

Board of Supervisors Information Item dated November 19, 2001 – Schedule of Policy Plan Review For Public Facilities, Parks and Recreation, and Transportation Sections

Draft Plan Amendment Activity dated May 11, 2005

Editor's Note: The Planning Commission recommended approval of OTPA S01-CW-15CP (Parks) on May 12, 2005 and it was approved by the Board of Supervisors on June 20, 2005.